

by now my back was killing me,
from my having stood on one or the other
of my deadened legs, like an obese heron,
for at least three hours.
i hadn't had any breakfast.
my student had scrounged only one section of the
morning paper:
the letters to the editor.

i was ten people from the counter
when all performances were officially declared sold out.

brenda, i hope your idol, zimmerman,
swallows his fucking harmonica.

WRITE ME OFF AND OUT

My one friend tells the other
that he is thinking of opening a beer bar

and the second friend tells the first
that he could use a write-off,

and the first says, "I'm just the man for you:
the last restaurant I owned
lost forty thousand in a year."

MECHANICS

Although I'm nearly thirty-seven,
the man with the Texaco star
always refers to me as "Buster,"
"Skipper," or "Sonny,"
and once he called me by some name
so juvenile that these friends and I
still laugh about it,
although we can't seem to remember what it was.

Recently, though, from an article in the local paper,
he found out that I pass,
in certain of the less discriminating circles,
as a poet,
so now he asks me where he can buy my books,
and I hedge on that, because I'm pretty sure
my literary standing in the grease pits
is bound to be diminished
by close familiarity of the works themselves.

But I'll tell you this, Old Fellah
(though I doubt you're over fifty),
I sure as hell can put a stanza back together
better than your young mechanic did my carburetor.

TO DAISY, WITH SPITE

daisy longfellow
was the most beautiful and popular girl
in mrs. botsford's ballroom dancing class.

and i, the faustian over-reacher,
in spite of my bad skin and quivering ego,
was somehow compelled to try to fill as many places
as possible on her saturday evening dance card.
sometimes she condescended
but more often her card was (politely) filled.

dixie, i have no idea how you turned out,
but we're both in our mid-thirties now

and i wonder if you're still all-booked
for every dance.

IN THE HEAT OF THE NIGHT

i'd fooled around with her some years before,
but the only reason i now sat down with her
was because there weren't any other
vacant seats in the bar.

so this guy had to start putting the make on her
and i didn't care if he slipped it to her
right there on the table
but he thought i cared
and i knew he thought i cared
and i knew that he was barging in
even though he thought i cared

and i began to get pissed off
just at the principle of the thing.

maybe he sensed that
or maybe it was just that she was doing such
a good job of warding him off,